R.N.I. Regd. No. DelEng/2002/8792

Neelamatam

Vol 1 Issue No. 3 April, 2012

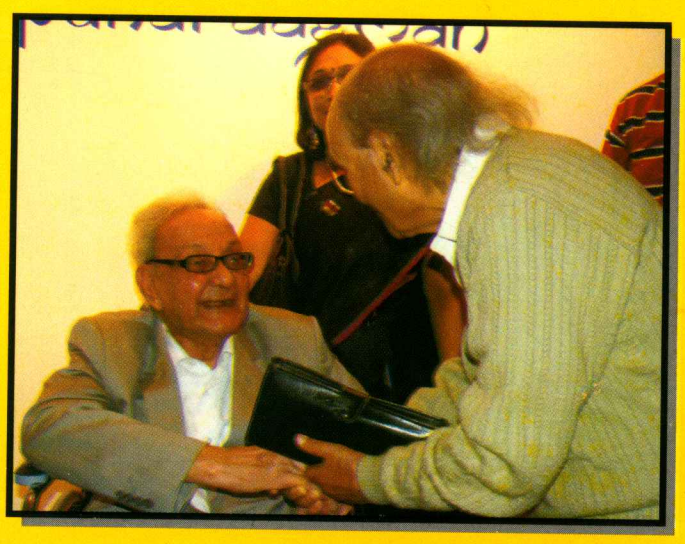
नमस्ते शारदा देवी कशमीर पुरवासिनी

ज्ञानं अन्नं

नीलमतम्

Research Journal of Nityanand Shastri Kashmir Research Institute

S.H. Raza with P.N. Kachru



Session with S.H. Raza

THE SESSION WITH S.H.RAZA

By P.N.Kachru

It was an auspicious occasion 5:30 PM on Friday the 25th November 2011. The meeting of the Master and his student chanced to happen after a dizzying span of sixty-three years.

The return to his motherland after a sojourn of about sixty years in Paris, Raza terms this occasion as Punaraagaman; and his old student P.N.Kachru justifiably terms his meeting with the Master as Punarmilan.

It was way back in the summer of the year 1948 that the Master, while in Srinagar, Kashmir, chanced to confront the three loitering youths, S.N.Butt, Triloke Kaul and P.N.Kachru. The wayward youths were trying to call themselves artists despite being beginners, groping in darkness. Though thay had picked some elementary tips from late Professor Percy Brown, which could not be sufficient for an execution; but with the constant company of S.H.Raza for more than a month opened the floodgates of practice and knowledge to forge ahead. The constant accompaniment and the dialogue with the Master was a source of immense information and knowledge. The Master's indulgence in handling and display of colour combinations, his sword-like brandishing, and sweeping strokes of brush with dexterity and exactitude was more than enough propulsion for his students to forge ahead.

Thus a vigorous movement the Modern Art Movement took its birth, the inspiration being none but S.H.Raza. Thence forward Butt, Kaul and Kachru became nick-named as the Trio, who were usually found loitering, with their sketch books, anywhere, on the Bundside from Abi-guzar to Munshi Bagh, thence-forward up the Shankracharya top to catch the arial view of cityscape. Alternately one could find them wading through the sunny-shady alleys and gangways skirted with rickety and haphazardly clustered house lines; or otherwise gliding through the serpentine Mar-canal under its medieval arch-bridges. All these ramblings would feed the Trio with the raw-material for their creations.

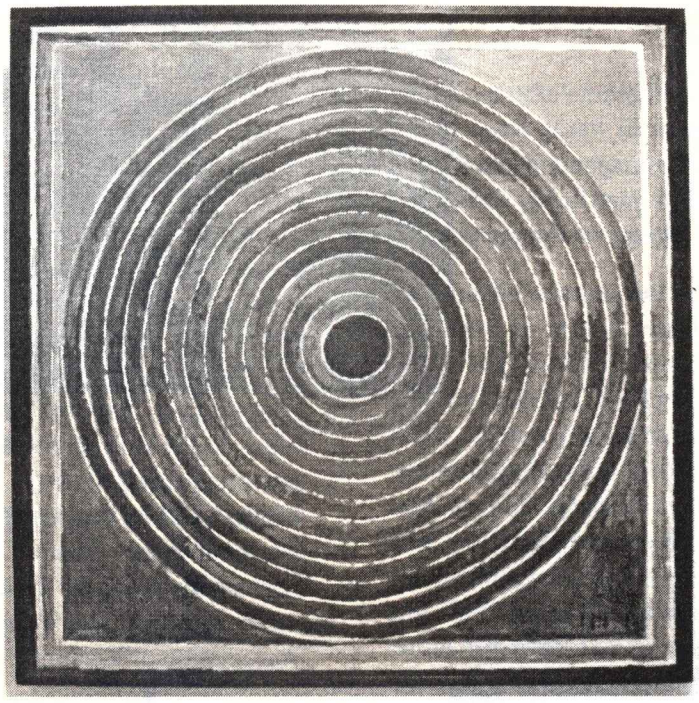
Several exhibitions were held, thus establishing the full-fledged movement. Gulam Rasool Santosh and some other formed the movement. Thus the Trio was transformed into the Progressive Artists Association. Several nation-wide shows were held; and the movement got the national recognisition. The Survey of Modern Indian Art, the publication of the National Book Trust of India assigned a respectable space for the contribution to the movement by the Progressive Artists Association of Kashmir.

While reminiscing over, Raza remembered late S.N.Butt, enquired about Triloke Kaul and asked for a photograph to re-visit the past; or, as I term it, the Punarmilan of the movement Raza established way back in the year-1948.

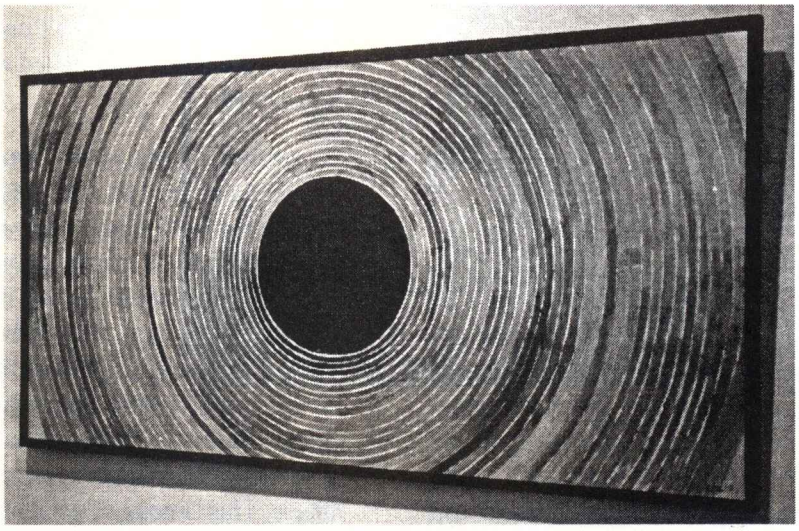
Reverting to his roots, Raza terms it as Punaraagaman. His root lies, according to him, in the birth place of his remote village, where his school master pinned a dot on the class-room board. As he recalls, it was Raza's first lesson. He finds that dot to be the first lesson in his philosophy of the Being, or what is Existant. According to him that dot is the Bindu, the cosmic dot that is the primordial form and the very essence of all that is. This is-ness, or what manifests Exists,

is the projection of that primordial form called Bindu.It is the very essence of what exists. It is the Bindu as the source of all projection that flowers and reverts back in to the very essence.

Raza's paintings are replete with the variegated geometric interpretations of cosmic existential forms, circumambulating like satellites around their source-the cosmic dot or Bindu.



Bindoo Pitambar S.H.Raza



Vritt S.H.Raza

A re-creative homage that was The Badam Wari of Dr. Ratan Parimoo

A linear recollection of the hoary past. While spending a couple of days in Baroda in the month of November 2011, an affectionate invitation from Rattan Parimoo was a pleasant and probing review of the past left behind. While exchanging our creative notes I stumbled upon his set of drawings. These drawings are the depictions of the dreamy and nostalgic reflections of his childhood days when, leaving behind the rigours of the chilly winter, his parents would thaw with the springtime March breezes and blossoms; the child Parimoo would accompany his parents to Badam Wari, the extensive and vast expanses of green vistas grooved and intensively foliaged with Almond blossoms trees, vistas of blooming pinks and extensive shadowy green meadows against the western back-drop of Hari Parbat hillock. Pondering over the eastern vistas ones sense and vision would feed on the shimmering vistas of lake-water front reflected with the mount Kaplas ranges and azure sky.

The whole breezy prospect would be abuzz with the fun and frolic of the picnic enthusiasts relaxing under the blooming shadows, cracking Singaras (nuts); elders enjoying Hukka (smoka) and ladies romancing with steamy Samavars and smelling aroma of chai (tea). Children frolicking, and roaming hawkers selling them balloons and whistles and kites. While some groups enjoying their home-made delicious and culineries like Roganjosh and Kababs with Rice.

Parimoo has caricatured his childhood nostalgia with his dexterous style after the traditional miniaturist form; but has carefully preserved the local profile and the habitat. His flowing linear formations and their simplicity has enhanced the simplicity of the miniaturist style.

About Rattan Parimoo:

Born in the year 1936 in a respectable Pandit family in Kashmir who resided in their traditional house in the locality called Purshyar in Haba Kadal, skirting over the shores or river Vitasta.

After his preliminary education Parimoo left his home in the year 1951 at the age of fifteen and joined in Baroda in M.S.University to pursue the knowledge of fine arts. There under the studentship of the great Indian painter. N.S.Bendre, he graduated and also got Masters degree in Fine Arts. In 1960 proceeded to London under common-wealth scholarship; and also got degree of B.A. (Hons) in history of Fine Arts. Did his Ph.D in fine arts and Art history. Lecturer, and later, Dean for faculty of Fine Arts (Baroda).

Travelled under Rockfeller grant to study Indian sculpture under Dr. Stella Kramrisch in USA. He is a prolific painter with numerous exhibitions held in various metropolitan cities of the country. Besides, he is a versatile writer who has many books and publications to his credit.

Presently, he is the Director of L.D.Museum and N.C.Mehta Gallery Ahmedabad (Gujrat).

P.N.Kachru

Badam Wari The Nostalgia

By Ratan Parimoo

Ratan Parimoo 2011

Ratan Parimoo 2011

Ratan Parimoo 2011

Ratan Parimoo 2011

Ratan Parimoo
2011

Ratan Parimoo 2011

Come O-Winter

P.N.Kachru

Contrary to the reminiscences of my friend and colleague Dr. Rattan Parimoo, who fondly re-lives his springtime flowery and blossoming days of childhood, I recall those bygone days when I would anxiously crave and await for winter to return.

Come winter, and its first performance would be to render and reduce the indefinite landscape to its basics and essentials. Ferns, bushes and foliages would reveal their sculptural and basic selves of woven and coyly patterned images. Hoary and skeletal array of chinars standing like sculpted sentinals brooding and pondering over the vaguely misty horizon. Through the vaguely defined vistas and expanses of denuded fields, there would reappear dim and peeping thatched roofs showing their glimpse and then diffusing under the misty blanket. It is a huddled suspense faintly relieved by crowing of a distant cock. It is a pleasing desolation and waywardness that tends towards a mute and relishing introversion; and then you glide through the defusing expanse.

Clustered houses huddled together, slumbering, a close embrace with each other to ward off the wheezing cold. There is no pulsation within as the inmates are opiated with the cozy covers; while the external housing vistas seem like sculptured groves diffusing in to the cold misty desolation. It is all meditative silence leading towards introversion. The ramshackle hutments and dwellings over the medieval arch bridges spanning the frozen canal. Frost encrusted lake-side with an array of grounded canoes skirting the clusters of carton like housing composition. All the prospects are apparent and shorn of an ambiguity. Come winter, and all the prospect appears in its essential form.

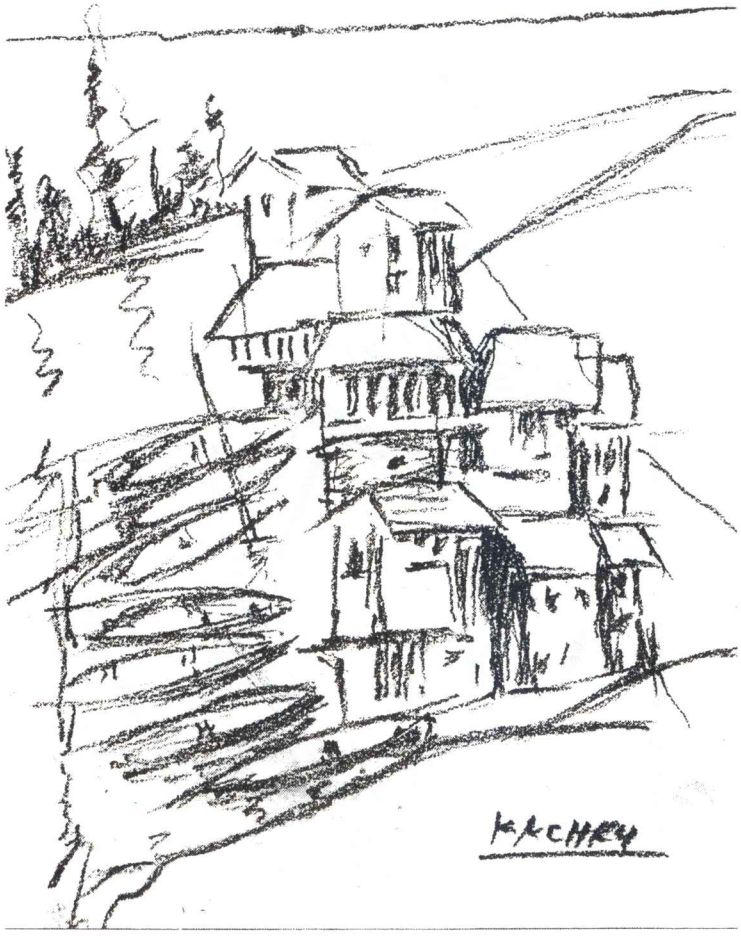
In hoary, misty suspense and chilly desolation, a lonely crow hovered and perched itself on top of the solitary and greying skeletal Chinar. It huddled its head within its wings and swooned into equipoise. I tarried enough, but the creature remained deep within itself. From my window I pondered again over the prospect, it looked like an ideal composition in grey and black against a soft hoary backdrop.

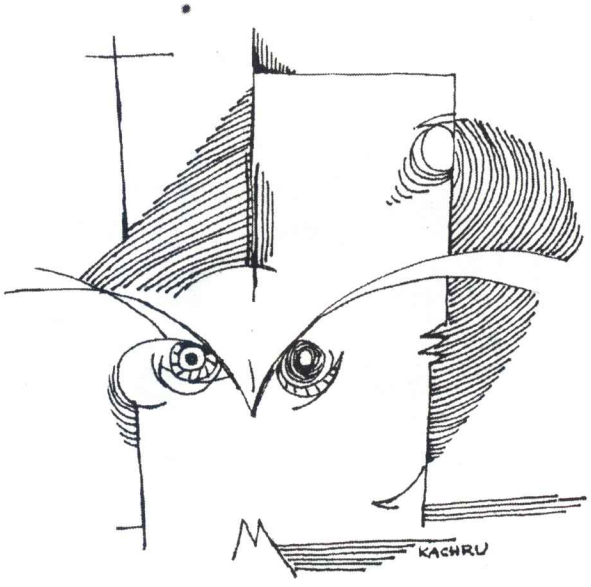
The sapless solitary and lonely forlorn leaf clinging desperately on topmost hanging twig of an old and monstrous greying Chinar tree. I hold my breath to catch the moment it will be snatched away by the sweeping and wheezing gale. I tarried to catch the moment, but the leaf still clung on. I reluctantly treaded homewards to reach by eventide for, I find the hooting glider about to perch over the eaves of my dwelling. It is awesome, desolate and silent depth of nocturnal blue, shaded with a faint and pallid moonshine. The glider couched itself mutely for awhile and then hooted a long hoo -----! Thus breaking the expansive silence, and tossing over the distant pinnacles, and then swimming back through the spatial blue. Hoo ----, it hoots again! And then a flutter in to the spatial deep.

I pondered that the lonely creature is a great recluse, wearing the mantle of loneliness and waywardness, with no clime and no abode! Ever surveying when the rest is a-slumber. Lo, it perches, breaths in and gives out a long hoo -------, and then it is silence and equipoise!

Come Winter

By P.N.Kachru




KACHRU

My visitation to Shrine of Sharda took place on the day of Ganga Ashtami in the month of September 1946. The in-situation then was, to some extent, worth observation and understanding when compared to the following years. My stay of two days at the location provided me the opportunity of a detailed study of locale and also of drawing to scale, of an architectural drawing with sections and plans. A reduced size of the drawings are herein attached.

For the subject matter it took me sometime in studies of scientific, historical and mythological aspects connected to it.

THE SHRINE OF SHARADA

By P.N.Kachru

Legendary and historic observations:

a) Nilmatpurana attributes the first discovery of Tirtha to sage Shandilya to whom the darshan of goddess was promised at Sharada. The identical legend is found in Sharada Mahatamya, in which Rishi Shandilya, son of Matunga, underwent a penance for obtaining the Darshan of Sharada. During his meditation Mahashakti predicts about her appearance to him at Syamala in the nearby forest of Sharadavana.

b) Kalhana in his Rajatarangini, in Taranga iv, verse 325 relates that visitors and yatris from Gauda (Bengal) during Lalitaditya's reign (700 736 AD), came to visit Kashmir under the pretext of visiting Sharada.

c) Alberuni (AD 1030) in his historical account speaks of the wooden Idol of Sharada as much venerated and frequented by pilgrims. He also names this Idol to be one of "the most famous idols of Hindus." Incidentally, there have been references of presence of wooden Maitreyas in neighbouring monasteries in Darel & Chilas by Fa-hein & Huintsang. This affirms the popular presence and practice of the woodcraft for production of sculptures.

d) Bilhana, the famous Kashmirian poet,in his Vikramankadevacharitam ascribes the patronage of learning claimed for the city of Pravarpura (Srinagar) to the favour of Sharada. "The goddess is said to resemble a swan, carrying as her diadem (of glittering gold) washed from the sand of the Ganga", the local river Kishenganga.

e) The story of 'Prabhavakacharitra' by 12th century Jain scholar, Hemachandra (also discussed by Prof. G. Bhular in his classical account of Hemachandra's life and labours) relates that when Hemachandra was commissioned by king Jayasimha of Gujarat, to compose a new grammar, he requested to be supplied with eight old grammars which could be found only in the library of goddess Saraswati (Sharada) in Kashmir. Jyasimha then sent his high officials to Pravarapura (Srinagar) in order to obtain the manuscripts, after which the scholar

1. The ancient classical notices of gold washing carried out by Darads of Kishenganga valley : Herodotus , iii 105 ; Strabo , xv 706 ; Burney , History of Ancient Geography (1883), i 229.

produced his own grammar titled' Siddhahemachandra'.

f) Jonaraja in his Tarangini relates Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's visit to the temple of Sharada in the month of Bhadrapadha in 1422 AD. The story indicates that after having been disappointed in not having seen the miracles heard from people at large, the wooden idol of the goddess reportedly got crushed mysteriously.

g) Further, Jonaraj records that "the goddess broke her own image by making the king an instrument". Aurel Stein, while writing about the image of Sharada, opines "that its (the image) destruction, rightly or wrongly, was connected with a pilgrimage which Zain-ul-Abidin made to the sight".

Putting together all available references there evolves a strong common pointer, though obliquely, put by the earlier committed court-historians, towards the king Zain-ul-Abidin himself who could be the only authority to muster the courage for ordering the destruction of the famous idol. This belies his historic reputation of secularity. He could not but remain faithful to his faith of Islamic Iconoclasm.

h) In contradiction to these historical documentations there prevails a popular legend in Karnataka that the image of Sharada, housed in the ancient Peetha of Shringeri (Mysore) was, in nineth century brought down by Adi-Shankaracharya while his sojourn in Kashmir. This legend remains contradicted later, by the south Indian scholars and devotees themselves, particularly those from Karnataka. The very first stanza from their famous poetic composition and prayer "Sharada Sutotram" confirmes the material presence of the image in Sharada (Kashmir) itself. The Sanskrit expression, "Kashmira-pura-vaasini" pointedly refers to the actual 'nivas'- the place of residence at the time when the poem was composed. The history also records its presence in Sharada till the first quarter of fifteenth century. The historic records, even remotely, do not record Acharyas visit to the valley excepting a lonely and passing reference of his visit in Madhavachari's Shankar Digvijay. The book unfortunately can not be qualified as a chronicle or history, but only a romantic narrative of exploits of religion and life of thirteenth century India written much after the age of Shankara. Mr. David.N.Lorenzen in his book 'The Kapalikas and Kalamukhas', while commenting on Madhavachari's Shankar Digvijay writes, "None of these sources can lay much claim to historical accuracy. They are collections of stories handed down, embellished and invented during several centuries between the theologian's death and their final redaction". Moreover the history also records the situated presence of the idol in Sharada till the first quarter of fifteen century.

Despite the factual documentations available, it is still not easy to shelve the Karnataka legend summarily, as the social legends always do have strong roots embedded into the fabric of social

2. Note-b-1-37, Shrine of Sharada , p-287. Stein's Rajatarangini , vol.II.
3. "Oh goddess Sharada who resides in the land of Kashmira, I offer my salutation to you. I always pray to you to gift me with knowledge".------ Sharada Sutotram courtesy C.V.Gopinath.
4. The verse number: 58, chapter 16 Shankar Digvijay by Madhavacharya.

happenings. No doubt these factual happenings are effectively and convincingly decorated with an element of rococo in style and romantic in theme in order to put the message through an aesthetic form that convincingly enraptures the social psyche.

The legend indisputably points towards some socio-religious happenings, which becomes a pointer towards the philosophic-cum-cultural impact from the land of Sharada on the southern society. The legend indisputably becomes a pointer towards the fact that Adi Shanker did become ardent and worshiper of Shakti while recognizing her as the expression of Parma Shiva's spiritual energy that flowers into the expression of the universe. Even to date, Shankara's Gauri-Stuti remains the most devotional and powerful expression and symbolisation of Shakti, with which each and every Shakti Peetha in the Sharada land resounds with these chantings: here I am referring to the famous stuti of "Gaureem Ambam Amburuhaksheem Ahamedey". Besides, Shankara's Saundarya Lahiri as the piece of master aesthecity, through which author pays his obeisance to Maha Shakti as Bhairava's (Shiva's) spiritual energy, thus projecting forth the Shaivagamic thought of Sharada land. In the symbolic sense we cannot but agree to Adi Shankara's allegiance to goddess Sharada from whose inspirational thought he became enlightened.

The archaeological and architectural observations:

The temple of Sharada rises on a prominent and commanding position above the right bank of Madhumati on the terrace-like foot of a spur which descends from a high pine clad peak to the East. Immediately below this terrace to the Northwest is the spot of confluence (Prayaga) of waters of Kishenganga and Madhumati. The Temple is approached from the lower side of the hill in the West by an imposing stone staircase, which leads up in sixty-three steps to the main entrance of the quadrangular court enclosing the temple. It is about 10 feet wide and rises rather steeply between two flanking walls of massive construction, broken in six steps or flights. The entrance to the court is through a gateway, provided with the usual double porch of Kashmirian architecture. There are columns, one on each side of the middle doorway, which support the trefoiled arches of the porches. The total depth of the gateway is about 12 feet.

The court to which it gives access, forms one oblong, accurately orientated and enclosed by a massive wall 6 feet thick. The enclosure measures 142 feet in length and 94 feet 6 inches wide in 3:2 proportion. The height of the enclosing walls proper is 11 feet from the level of the court to the projecting rim at the foot of the coping. The latter rises in pyramidal form to a height of about 8 feet above the top of the wall. Seen from outside the walls of the enclosure appear still more massive and imposing, as they are raised in basement walls, built with a view to equalise the different elevations of the ground. The substructure walls vary in height from 5 to 12 feet, and rise in some places to the total height of wall visible from outside to about 30 feet. In the entrance of the northern wall there is a small recess, about 3 feet 3 inches square inside, opening by a trefoil-arched door towards the interior of the court. There is a similar small cella on the East Side of the enclosing wall, and about 5 feet to the south of it a square postern, 3 feet broad. It gives access to the terraces on the hillside rising behind the temple, and to a spring called Amarkunda,

somewhat higher up.

The temple, which occupies the center of the quadrangle, forms a square cella. It is raised on a basement 24 feet square and 5 feet 3 inches high. The walls of the cella proper recede about 2 feet from the edge of the basement. They are adorned on North, East and south by trefoil arches and supporting pilasters both projecting in relievo. Below these arches are small trefoil headed niches covered by double pediments. The walls of the cella are about 20 feet above the basement up to the trefoil arches.

The goddess Sharada, being Hamsa-vahini, representing the limitless vision and the knowledge of cosmic and acosmic dimensions, could not be put under physical limitations. Also her legendary appearance in upward flight through the kund (pond) doubly leads to the idea of an open and roofless architecture that stands as a unique and singular example of style in the history of Kashmir architecture. Besides there are scarcely any traces of the usual pyramidal double stone roof. The absence of any debris which such a massive roof, when destroyed, could have left in and around the cella a huge and massive mass, leads to the conclusion of roofless structure which shows a unique and mystical feature in Kashmir architecture.

The other unique and singular feature that lends awe-inspiring grandeur to the edifice, is the megalithic and massive stone staircase that rises in sixty-three steps that renders an imposing mid air majesty to the architecture. No doubt, the only other example of the feature, though on a much smaller scale, can be seen while climbing to the well known Shankaracharya temple in Srinagar.

The entrance to the interior of the cella is on the westside, and is approached by stairs 5.5 feet wide with flanking sidewalls. There is an open portico in front of the door projecting about 4 feet beyond the pilasters on each side of the doorway. It is supported on the outside by two pillars, 2 feet 4 inches, and has no decoration of any kind. The only conspicuous object in it is a large rough slab on the ground, which measures about 6x7 feet, with a thickness of about 1-foot. This stone is believed to cover a kunda, or spring cavity, from which Sharada appeared to Rishi Shandilya, and is object of the pilgrim's special veneration.

The scientific and research observations:

From research and investigative point of view the Shrine of Sharda throws open its barriers and enclosures and leads us into the vistas of international fields.

The initial enquiry leads one to investigate the nomenclature of the place and of the Shrine. To find out source of the name one might have to research for the origins of the occupants who populated the region through bygone centuries . The ancient Indian scenario is abuzz with mighty movements and migrations of various races who kept alive the routes of its north-western barriers by penetrating to find the vistas of fertile lands for their settlements. Through millennia the main races which populated the western vistas of the land were the Arias from across the immediate regions of north west, who came to be known as Aryans; Parthians were from Parthia (Persia) and Assyrians, known as Asurs, migrating from Assyria. Its south-western neighbouring tribes known as

5. 'A-cosmic'; though not being a word in the lexicon, has been used here to convey the 'relative' of cosmos. The 'other' by virtue of which it exists.
6. The Mahabharata hero Arjuna was addressed as Partha, which indicates to his lineage

Caldaeans who originated from the ancient regions of Chaldaea, also were struggling for their foothold in the fertile expanses of western India. The Vedic, epic (Mahabharata) and Puranic references vividly signify these warring tribes fighting for their suzerainty. In this struggle chaldeaens seem to have gained no foothold, these being lesser marauders but with some cultural up-bringing. In search for their protection they seem to have found the valley well-protected for their settlement. Thus they seemed to have selected for their migration the convenient and a less hazardous route into the valley. Amongst all the entrances (Drangs) through the mountain ranges, the south-western entrance through the Kishengang basin was convenient and less hazardous. The Drang (entrance) in to the valley through this route was strategic point to be held, protected and consolidated. This spot at the confluence of Kinshinganga and Madhumati rivers developed into an ancient settlement of Chaldaeans, later on known as Shardian which in course of time changed into Shardi. The village is still to this day known by this very name. the temple that was consecrated by the settlers to their deity was named Sharda the Mother goddess of Shardians.

The influx of Shardians (chaldaeans) into the valley seemed to be a non-combative ethnic and cultural contribution after the Harrapans. The Indo-Aryan system of linguistics being an inception in Kashmir so far as language and writing is concerned. Although, the ancient Indo-Aryan language is the universal Indian feature, but the script development remained stranded and static in the valley, as opposed to the Indian development into Dev-nagri. The script of Indo-Aryan linguistics is the sole contribution of Shardians (Chaldaeans); who originally were the occupants of the region that bordered with ancient Assyrian territory. The first and the oldest available attempt at scripting has been found in ancient Assyria from where it crossed over to Shardians (Chaldaeans) for its further development. It went through many successive developments till it reached to its final stage that we call Sharda script. The script seems to have gone through many evolutionary convulsions before it reached to its final stage. The process of development is evident in specimen of the decipherment done by Sir Aurel Stein in the year 1898. The script's immediate predecessor also is identified by the scholar, identifying it as Horiuzi script. (Fig. 1, courtesy Nilamatam, Vol. I, no. 2, Dec-2007).

The climes and regions for Sharda script have been discovered extensively, particularly in Central Asian, North Western Indian and Kashmir regions. A great race for Central Asian manuscript by various travelers and scholars from various European countries, is proverbial; and a great game. It was in the year 1889 that an army officer of British India Lieutenant Hamilton

7. Kamsasur, Bhasmasur, Bakasur, Mahishasur and a host from Asura tribe are spotted in epics and Puranas who are in constant struggle with Devatas (arias). The well-known Puranic story of the struggle between the powerful and dominant Devatas led by Indra who were drenched in luxury and cajoling, comforting themselves with luxuries of wealth, and dancing Apsaras and Maidens. The warrior tribe of Asuras wage an assault on the fabulous Indrapuri dethroning Indra who had to run for shelter and safety.
8. This tribe had its origin in ancient regions known as Chaldaea, located in the southern basin between rivers Tigris and Euphrates. In later history the fabulous civilization of Babylon rose up on the ashes of Chaldaea (Martyrdom of Man, page 44; winwood Reade). Later historians term these tribes as Shardians.
9. The word Drang denotes the mountain entrance or gateway. Kashmir valley all around the ranges had mountain entrances which were controlled by authorities called Drangesh (the chief of the gateway). All the ancient and medieval kings who ruled had an exclusive ministry incharge of the gateway. Kalhanas Rajyatarangini carries numerous references to Drangs, Drangesh and Drangapatis.
10. Madhumati is a subsidiary mountain stream that flows through the mountain gorges of Karnah ranges and joins Kishengaga at Shardi Village settlement. This stream brings along with it a considerable amount of gold dust that settles at the confluence. The settlers at Shardi were gold-dust collectors through centuries. A mythical legend has been vowan that goddess Sharda wore the crown made from this very gold-dust.

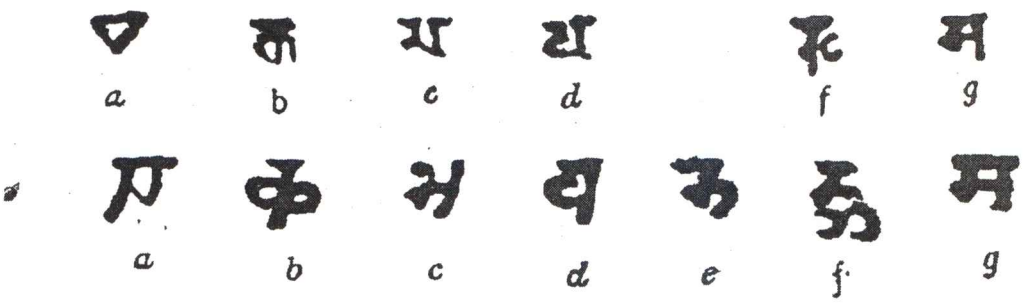
Bower, while traversing through Yarkand and Kucha discovered a collection of birch bark manuscripts in the possession of one of the local residents. Bower purchased them and dispatched them to Asiatic Society of Bengal. In 1895 George Macartney, the British Counsel General in Kashgar, forwarded his manuscript finds. Aurel Stein's collection of the year 1900 finds; and the collection of F-weber, (1902) the Moravian missionary in Leh, who purchased a collection from a central Asian named Gulam Qadir. All the horde of manuscript collections reached Asiatic Society of Bengal. There, Dr. Augustus Rudolf Hoerule a great Sanskrit linguist deciphered them and found them written in Sharda Brahmi alphabets (also confirmed by Sir Aurel Stein, see Fig-I).

The Russian counsel in Kashgar Nikolai Petroveski had a big haul of such manuscripts through the years 1895-97 all preserved in Hermitage in Moscow. Cartographer Dutreuil-de-Rhins and an orientalist Fernand Grenard, both French travelers in Chinese Turkistan, found their collection to be Dhampada in Sharda script. In 1898 another Russian scholar Dimitri Klementiz brought similar manuscripts from Gobi-Taklamakan region (Go through chapter 3, The great Manuscript Race. Peter Hopkirk Foreign Devils on the Silk Road; Oxford University Press).

The Sharda scribal formation appears to have been in practice throughout the Indo-Aryan linguistic regions. As late as in the year 1208 during Nadir Shah's rule the coins in North Western India were inscribed in bilingual format (Fig II). One side of the coin had Sharda inscription and the other side carried the Arabic inscription. So the practice of Sharda form of writing is evident on the north-Western Indian soil. In practice, it has been through past centuries, on the way of its extinction giving place to its much developed formation of Dev-Nagri.

In Kashmir the script lingered on for a long time due to its geographical segregation from the main land, but the impact took its place, though very slowly. The first Dev Nagri impact came upon the professional Kashmiri scribes (Lekharis) who used to move out in groups during winter months to other Indian towns to earn by re-copying the old manuscripts in different localities. With the change in writings on the Indian scene Kashmiri scribes had to pick up the new formations for their livelihood.

The next impact was decisive and powerful. The incoming and introduction of printing material that carried the developed modern print of DevNagri; and subsequently in-flow of printed religious books and other Hindi literature. Scribes became local printers and established their own press as well. The first of its kind was Pratap Steam Press established in down town of Srinagar.



Alphabets of Horiuzi and Sharada characters reproduced form:

The Bower Manuscript, A.F.R. Hoernle, ASI, New Imperial Series, 1912. (Original alphabet in Sharada script taken from a birch-bark manuscript presented by M.A. Stein to Rudolf Hoernle in December 1898)

Plate I

The first bilingual coins: *Silver jitals issued by Mahmud of Ghazni minted in Lahore, 1208*

Plate II

A THRICE TOLD TALE

P.N.Kachru

Brooding over the days that have diffused into hoary mists of yore, I recollect a fine early summer day when a golden oriole in the shadowy cluster of the pear tree, out in my garden, was ecstatic and vibrant with his tune; but suddenly fluttered away through the azure expanse. Thus I came back into the world of my study books. While probing through the selves of books of my brother, I came upon a tattered copy of the college magazine Pratap that belonged to the times when my elder brother was a college student. Being fascinated with this seemingly aged document I, with curiosity probed through these creamy pages. I came upon an article, written by a friend and the colleague of my brother's college days, titled Leaves from the Diary of Bodha Kenue. The article opens up with the story of writer's accidental detection of a couple of soiled leaves written in Urdu, lying in the narrow lane of his neighbourhood. He picked them up and quite diligently translated them in English, and contributed to his college magazine.

Bodh Kenue, as the diary leaves reveal was the lonely son of his father. His father had a tiny window shop in his little two-storey (ground & first floor) house. He would sooth the ailments of neighbours by selling them medical herbs which he would partly collect from the wild herbages from fields and partly would supplement them with herbages like poppy and its seeds used as sedatives and anti-pain, and prickly thistle seeds, used as anti-fever and diuretic. These would grow wildly over the earthen roof-top of his cottage.

Seeing Bodha growing into his adulthood (hardly 14 years) his father remonstrated him to leave behind his youthful pranks and behave like a grown up and worldly wise person. Suddenly Bodha got conscious of his age. He abruptly turned into a brood and an introvert, and tried his best to inculcate in his person the grave stance and an elderly behavior. Only next day he stepped into the neighbourhood shanty of the barber and asked him to outline his hardly visible and mellow shoots of his face. Occasionally, on his father being out, he would pose as a grave-looking person, and would posture himself over the window, puffing over the Hukka of his father and thus projecting his elderly personality to passers of the lane. The seal of adulthood was finally impressed upon him when he came to know that he was shortly going to be married, his widowed father being anxious to re-settle the household after the demise of his wife.

Days and months passed by, and on an evening, while sitting together on an evening grub, his father while in his pensive mood told his son "Bodha, the old age has taken upon me, and in addition my ill health doesn't permit me now to carry with the collection and sale of herbages. I think now you should take up the responsibility and also go into the knowledge of the medicinal plants". Bodha listened pensively and both, father and son busied themselves with the meals served by the young housewife.

Enburdened with the household, Bodha was now being invariably seen on his window-shop of herbages, pensively brooding in his loneliness after the sudden demise of his father. He hardly had come out of the grief when his three months pregnant wife suddenly collapsed, leaving Bodha alone to fend for himself under the bleak firmament.

For many days the herbal shop-window remained closed. His enclosure and his shanty remained haunted and desolate with awe-stricken silence. After quite a lapse of time Bodha was seen on the window-shop, vaguely and dis-interestedly surveying the shelves, when he was confronted by an elderly turbaned person with a bold Tilak on his forehead and with neatly worn Pheran. Expecting him to be the first client of his career Bodha welcomed him and greeted him with a Namaskaar. After showing the affection of his sympathy to Bodha, the old man addressed, "Bodha, the fate and destiny cannot be challenged. Only one has to compromise with it; so take courage and confront the situation". Bodha's eyes brimmed with tars to have received such a consolation from a god-sent person whom he did not know. Bodha had hardly wiped out his tears when the old man, while posing his sympathy, advice and guidance, said "Bodha as you are supposed to take the responsibilities of your father now, I am constrained to inform you that many years before your father had borrowed a Khaam Rupee (50 paise) from me. I being a Saahukar (money lender) agreed to pay him on the condition that he would repay along with whatever will be the simple and complex interest. Now that you have to take the responsibilities, you must repay the money which amounts to a total of Rupees five. Take care Bodha, I will come again". Bodha's body got stiff and stunted, his throat stifled and choked, his eyes turned vague and stoned; his body became a crippled boulder heaped on the window-shop. Evening was just approaching, Bodha suddenly jumped up with a thundering laughter, and while raving tore off his Pheran and jumped out of the window-shop; and went on running and laughing through the lanes and by-lanes of his locality. Henceforth Bodh Kenue sho up to be called Bodh Mot (lunatic) in his locality. Passers-by would jibe, tease and laugh at semi-naked Bodha; even some ladies of the locality would, with pity, pass on a crumb to him. The street urchins would frolic and yell over the running lunatic. Every evening when a weird suspense and silence would permeate the dark lanes and alleys, Bodha would find his rest and leisure over the projecting planks of his shop-window. While stretching out his tiered and aching body, he would gaze over starry sky for hours and would introspect over the jugglery which fate had destined him to perform like a conjurer and a trickster to evade the torments of life around, with his madness. A faint smile of sanity would pass over his countenance, that would swoon him into a slumber; but would occasionally frighten up lest it was not the rising morn when he had to be a lunatic again. The money-lender never turned up again and Bodha lunatic went on raving and howling through the days and passing nights surveying the infinite firmament.

After going through this tale of pathos and moroseness, I came back to my dreams of romantic illusion, which seemed to be crumbling like a house of cards. Bodha the lunatic haunted me like a trailing shadow and became a counter-balance to my romantic illusions of life. A sense of craving to saunter and loiter through the lanes of Keni Mohala (the locality of Bodh Kenue) gripped me strongly. One early morning, immediately after breaking my slumber, I was involuntarily drawn towards the locality to find out the place that was once the abode of Bodha. It was a prospect of creeping and crawling desolution. A crumbling moss-grown enclosure of raw brick walls, within which a wild growth of Datoora bushes with clusters of greenish white flowers, were thriving over the ashes of a tragic life.

Lost within the dim shadows of this violent growth, I was woken-up by the mumblings and mutterings of some approaching men and women. They quite enthusiastically waded into the bushy enclosure and each one plucked the Datoora flowers and passed away while mumbo-jumboing in undertones. While gazing over their vanishing figures, I could deduce that they were taking those floral bunches to their adytums to offer them to those shadowy and stunted lumps of absurdity. I retraced, arguing within myself --- was Bodha lunatic? If not, then who was?

Walter Roper Lawrence & The Land Settlement in Kashmir

S.N. Pandita

Just some days ago I read a 'letter' titled " Sir Walter Lawrence" written by Shri Hriday Nath of Channi Himat, Jammu that appeared in the Reader's Response, AIKS NAAD, March 2012 (page -41) and Editor's Mail, Koshur Samachar, March 2012 (page 23). The letter written by the learned author-scholar is in response to "Ghulam Ahmad Ranjura's discourse on the subject in the weekly Kashmir cultural programme "Pamposh" broadcast from Radio Kashmir, Jammu on 15-2-2012 (8PM)". Writes the eminent author, " Sir Walter Lawrence popularly known as Lawrence Sahib is an acclaimed historian of the 17th / 18th century, author of " Valley of Kashmir" and an authority on land settlement. He executed this yeoman task for the first time in Kashmir."

The author's claim that Walter Lawrence was an acclaimed historian of 17th/18th century and the first one to have undertaken land settlement in Kashmir suffers veracity. Generally speaking, Walter Lawrence is well known to Kashmiri masses as the popular Land Settlement Officer and author of the famed book 'The Valley of Kashmir'. The present brief paper is an attempt to bring Walter Lawrence out from the penumbra of scant information that has eclipsed his great life and labours in Kashmir.

Early Life and Arrival in India

Walter Roper Lawrence was born in Moreton on- the Lugg in Heresford, Gloucestershire, UK in 1857. His family, a Welsh, was fond of music, song, sport and anecdotes. His father and two uncles were good sportsmen but philosophers too. The 'three philosophers' shared sometimes laughter, sometimes wrath and then affectionate reconciliation. Lawrence's all brothers and sisters were intelligent and accomplished but his favourite brother was Wyndham. He was a sportsman and a poet. As a child, Lawrence's mother and governess taught him to read without tears. Later he was put in A. Dames School in Cotswolds where he learnt Latin and Greek grammers. At Dames, he made a lot of friends but it was the American Endicott Peabody who remained his best and lifelong friend. From the Dames School, Lawrence entered Cheltenham College from where he passed out in 1876. His father wished that he became a barrister. However, a family friend who was a naval officer talked about the life of a civil servant in India. At the end of school days, Lawrence on quite several occasions was remonstrated by his father for lack of industry and energy and one who had no chance of passing the examination for the Indian Civil Service

Lawrence went to Balliol College in Oxford in October 1877. There, his teachers took keen interest and persuaded him to take the examination for Indian Civil Service. In the Balliol College, Lawrence was fortunate to be taught by Arnold Toynbee, the legendary historian who was eventually to become one of the greatest intellectuals of his times. Besides the Balliol, Lawrence also attended the Magdalen and the New College in Oxford. While at Oxford between 1877-79, Lawrence worked hard with diligence to clear the ICS examination and had the great luck to come out at the head of the merit list. But strange enough he never met anyone who ever mentioned India. Nonetheless he read some Indian history and Indian law. But there was none to tell him

of life in India and the work there which awaited a young civil servant.

However, Lawrence's great foundation for a happy successful life in India was the result of his good fortune to have learnt Hindustani from an excellent teacher while he was still in Oxford. During the period Lawrence was in Oxford, there were few ladies at the college. Among them was one named Rhoda Broughton with whom Lawrence had the privilege of being friend. Lawrence used to go to her charming house where she lived with her sister. It was in Rhoda's house that Lawrence met the great English poet Robert Browning who then, according to Lawrence, 'told many anecdotes of social life but never anything that alluded to literature".

Among Lawrence's early friends in Oxford were two who profoundly affected his life. One lived on the same staircase and their neighoubership led to a lifelong friendship. He tempted Lawrence to return to England after he had served for 16 years in India. The other lived on a staircase opposite to that of Lawrence. He persuaded him to return to India. There was also an Indian Muslim from Bengal who entertained him with smoking of hooka on the floor. Though Lawrence and his Indian friend parted with regret, it was he who gave him a letter of introduction to one of his acquaintances in Bombay when former set sail for India. Following the completion of the term at Balliol, it was hard for Lawrence to define the charm of Oxford or explain the source of her influence on him.

To serve in India Lawrence had chosen North West Provinces later also called United Provinces. But luckily for him, just before he started for India he was transferred to the Punjab. However, due to sheer ignorance of climate in India, he purchased clothes which would have been of good use in Madras but unimaginably ridiculous in the Punjab. On way to India, Lawrence knew no one there. But friends gave him letters of introduction to officials in the North West Provinces. He never delivered these and kept them as prized possession. After a long journey, Lawrence reached Lahore on one cold morning of December 1879 without a friend and without a blanket. He shivered in his flimsy garments with a wallet as cold as his body. After taking his initial job assignments in India Lawrence rose quickly to become Secretary to Lord Dufferin just before he retired.

Land Settlement in Kashmir

In 1877-79, there was a terrible famine in Kashmir. It saddened Maharaja Ranbir Singh's latter part of life. Lawrence met him and his three sons at the Durbar held in Lahore in 1881. Maharaja Ranbir Singh died in 1885 and was succeeded by his son Pratap Singh. Subsequent to the terrible famine of 1877-79 in which half and according to some three fifths of the population of Kashmir perished, the ill equipped administrative machinery of the state government got exposed. To cope with such calamities, Maharaja Pratap Singh soon after the accession to throne initiated much needed land revenue system reforms. Making request to the Government of India to lend the services of an experienced Settlement Officer for the task, one Ghulam Farid Khan, Extra Assistant Commissioner of Blauchistan was nominated for the task. However, the Resident of Kashmir J.J. C. Plowden did not endorse Farid Khan's appointment and insisted on induction of a British officer for the job. With eventual persuation of the Maharaja to accept an English officer, Government of India, on the recommendation of Wace, Financial

Commissioner of Punjab, selected A.Wingate, Settlement Officer in Udaipur for the job. Wingate joined as the Settlement Officer of Kashmir on January 15, 1887. This followed a good progress in work for two Tehsils of Kashmir namely Phak and Lal. However, Wingate left the Settlement when the work was still incomplete.

Following Lord Dufferin's retirement, he was succeeded by Lord Lansdowne as Viceroy in 1888. At this time Lawrence was informed unofficially that there were three appointments which might be offered to him. One, the Under Secretaryship in the Foreign Department, second the post of First Assistant to the resident of Hyderabad and third the work of Settlement Officer in Kashmir. The officer who decides these appointments considered first two better than the third one. But Lawrence had always looked on Kashmir as the place of his Indian dreams.

Friends had however, warned him to the contrary as they feared that the seclusion of the valley encircled by mountains hid often in clouds would make him "out of sight and out of mind". But the lure of very name 'Kashmir' attracted Lawrence. He was offered the post of Settlement Officer by Lord Lansdowne. On setting out for a long journey to Kashmir, Lord William Beresford gave Lawrence a cryptic advice: "Do not accept a cook from the Kashmir State." Another friend said: "If you are going up for a loaf, well and good, but if you are dreaming of getting anything done, look out for trouble."

Lawrence succeeded Wingate in April 1889. While Wingate set up the Settlement Department, it was left to Lawrence to complete the task of land survey and settlement in next 5 years. The work of Settlement which commenced in 1887 finished in 1894. Lawrence personally supervised the survey work by staying in Kashmir in the winters of 1890 and again in 1892. The final Settlement cost the exchequer rupees 4 lacs. In this great task, Lawrence was assisted by three persons namely H.L. Rivett, Lala Narsingh Das and Sayed Alam Shah. Rivett joined the Settlement in 1891. Narsingh Das was associated from the beginningitself i.e.1887 and left Kashmir in 1893 to take up the appointment as Settlement Officer of Jammu. Sayed Alam Shah joined in 1890 and remained till the survey was completed in 1894. Others who helped Lawrence in this task included Gurshai Mal and Amir Singh. Gurshai Mal died in harness in 1891 and Amir Singh was appointed in Gilgit Settlement in June 1893. Lawrence's work had the fullest support of three successive British Residents in Kashmir namely parry Nisbet, A.D. Prideaux and F.W.D.K Barr.

Some Important Incidents related to Settlement

Lawrence's arrival in Kashmir was greeted with a chilly welcome. Even though the Maharaja wanted the Settlement, the officials and petty menial staff wished for its failure because it interfered with their perquisites. At the time Lawrence started work on the Settlement there was no value for land in Kashmir. And yet almost everything, save water and air, was taxed; fruit trees, birch-bark, silk, saffron, paper, water-nuts, hemp, tobacco were taxed. Unbelievable as it may sound; even grave-diggers and prostitutes were also taxed. Initially, at least for the first two months Lawrence and his staff got their salaries in the form of grains and other food items. First it was water chestnut (Singhara) and then oil seeds (Tilgogol). Lawrence felt ashamed

and remembered the warnings of his Simla friends. He declined to accept his salary in kind.

Desperate he approached the Maharaja for payment in 'double rupee'. He rode in from the camp and when he reached the Palace, he was informed that the Maharaja had gone for the boat race on the beautiful Dal Lake. Six months before Lawrence reached Kashmir, the Maharaja had been temporarily deposed by the Government of India. A state Council headed by Raja Amar Singh as President had been constituted to run the affairs of the state.

Reaching Dal Lake, he bowed to the Maharaja. But Lawrence found the deposed chief "with no wish to be at this festival". Pratap Singh was bored and irritated, feeling friendless and desperate. So was Lawrence. After an hour's talk, Lawrence ventured to say that he had a request and pleaded for the release of his salary. To this the Maharaja said' "You must go to my brother, he is Maharaja." "I have been to him and he says you are Maharaja. Will you give orders to the Treasury official to pay me in British rupeesj" replied Lawrence. "Yes" said the Maharaja.

Once riding through Sonamarg where Lawrence's family were living in the summer months, he was told by a horseman that an agitated crowd had gathered and if he desired to see as to what had happened? As Lawrence walked into the midst of the crowd, he enquired what was happening. A man put his head through to show his whisker half torn off his face and bleeding.

"Who did it" asked Lawrence "Colonel Natha" said the crowd. At this time a fine looking Dogra came out of his house and stood on the steps. He looked at the crowd and Lawrence with rage and contempt. "Are you Colonel Natha," asked Lawrence. "Yes, and who are you," He said. 'Like you a servant of Kashmir State," replied Lawrence. "Did you tear the man's whisker," insisted Lawrence. "Yes, for they refuse to go to Gilgit for work unless we use violence". Said Natha. "Well, if you remain servant of the State, I shall not continue to serve the State," said Lawrence. "You better collect transport for Gilgit yourself. I am sick of this work," retorted Natha.

After the encounter, Lawrence sent a telegram to the Prime Minister giving all the details of this incident and requested for the dismissal of Colonel Natha. A telegram came back stating that transport for Gilgit would be arranged but was silent on Natha. Lawrence repeated " Natha must be dismissed or I should resign my appointment under the State." Some days passed and Lawrence sent in his 'letter of resignation'. Then came a telegram stating "Natha dismissed." This in spite of the fact, that he was a cousin of the Maharaja. Still not happy, Lawrence insisted that it should be notified in the State Gazette, the only paper that villagers trusted. There was a great reluctance to it. But Lawrence prevailed. By now Lawrence knew Kashmiri. He went to the Gazette press to see the proof of the publication. And yet there was no mention of Natha. The publisher said he had no instructions in that regard. Lawrence telegraphed the Prime Minister yet again. A day later came the 'reluctant consent'.

A long time after, Lawrence met Natha again but this time in Punjab where he moved his survey party during winters. One day when Lawrence was riding along, three Dogra Rajputs galloped towards him almost riding him down. But they reigned just in time in front of Lawrence. And one of them said: "D'not you remember me Natha and

the man with the whiskers." "I think it is very good of you to meet me in this courteous friendly way, for I did you an injury," replied Lawrence. "Injury what injury,' said Natha. " Why I insisted on your dismissal from the state", replied Lawrence. Natha laughed. " It was no injury. I wanted to be back in my own villages. I hate Kashmir and all its people,' replied Natha finally. From that day onwards Natha and Lawrence became fast friends.

Once a petitioner followed Lawrence for one week, even when he had told him that his matter was outside his jurisdiction. The man however, reappeared. Lawrence ordered him to be removed. "Stop ", the man pleaded "it is not a petition it is a poem". The man recited it in front of a crowd. Its last lines read: "Thanks to Bando- o-bast sahib, the jackal, the sheep and cabbage lie down together in peace."

Once Lawrence saw a Pandit in a crowd. He was standing on his head. But no one was surprised. Lawrence asked for the reason of this strange behaviour . The Pandit smiled and said: "Thanks to your Settlement. My affairs have become topsy-turvy. I do not know whether I was standing on my head or my heels."

Lawrence made daily rides up and down the Sindh Valley during the course of his work there. There he heard of a Mullah who was more powerful in Kashmir than the Maharaja or the Governor. People regarded him divine. Lawrence desired to meet him. Even once Maharaja had a wish to meet him but the Mullah had declined him the wish. However, hearing of Lawrence's good work the Mullah once came out of his cave and appeared on the bank of the river opposite the high camp where Lawrence had pitched his tent. "The Mullah has come , it is great matter and a great honour' , said Lawrence's Chief Camp-Orderly Satar Bhat.

Sometime later, Lawrence and Mullah met; first they sat in absolute silence and then engaged in mild conversation. Mullah spoke in clear Hindustani and was understandable to Lawrence. Mullah had heard of Lawrence's encounter with Natha. He was pleased that Lawrence had kept his vow and people trusted him for his good work. But Mullah also remonstrated Lawrence. It was a matter of divorce. "You have taken on yourself affairs that do not belong to you," said the Mullah. "In my work everything which effects the well being of a village is my affair", replied Lawrence. "Is divorce your affair, I thought it was mine. I have heard of a couple at Gaganger, was that your business or mine", said the Mullah assertively. "Yours" replied Lawrence

The story of Gaganger goes like this: One evening Lawrence sat with his son and wife on the bank of a river that divided Kashmir from Ladakh . There appeared an old woman with her beautiful daughter. The old woman pleaded for the divorce of her daughter from her cruel husband who beat her every now and then. "But I have nothing to with divorce", said Lawrence. "You have to with everything in this valley", implored the old woman. "My daughter's husband has gone to cut wood and my two sons will seize him over the bridge on his return and bring him to your camp. Twice my daughter fled from Gaganger. Rather than go back, she will commit suicide". The woman continued saying. Two hours later the man appeared escorted by the girl's brothers. Lawrence asked the man," Do you beat her." "Yes, I beat her, she does not cook my food" said he. "I cannot allow the scandal of this kind in the valley," warned Lawrence. "For your

happiness you better divorce your wife and marry someone who will cook your food", admonished Lawrence the man further. The man whimpered: "But I love her."

At this,Lawrence enquired from the brother's if the matter could be settled. They said yes, if he paid rupees twenty that he had promised to their sister. Lawrence called for the girl and her mother who said all would be fine if the husband paid the money. The girl's face lit up with joy. Lawrence summoned the man and ordered for payment of rupees twenty. The man had just one rupee and half and the wood he carried from over the bridge would add to another half. Lawrence purchased the wood and directed his Head clerk Keshu Ram to bring the balance to be paid to the girl. Following this all went happily.

After some time Lawrence again happened to meet the Mullah. " It was your business ,but was I wrong", he told the Mullah. "Yes, You were wrong, just as I should be wrong if I told you what land revenue you should take from Gaganger," said the Mullah.

Every year afterwards there came to Lawrence at Srinagar two apples from Gaganger sent by the girl's family. It was a Dali of remembrance and the only Dali Lawrence accepted from the Kashmiris.

Some Interesting Encounters with Maharaja Pratap Singh

Lawrence first met Pratap Singh at the Durbar held in Lahore in 1881 where the latter had come with his father Maharaja Ranbir Singh. But it was only in 1889, after Lawrence came to Srinagar in connection with the Settlement work and Pratap Singh had since taken to throne after his father, that the two became good and constant friends. Both maintained a regular correspondence even after Lawrence left India. Pratap Singh's constant letters were written in a tiny difficult script full of quaint sans and kindness. Once in 1894 a very competent doctor told Lawrence that the Maharaja had no more than two months to live. But he lived for another 30 years. Though suffering from ill health for most of his life, Lawrence had grown to look on Pratap Singh as immortal! But who is immortal? In September 1925, Lawrence spent a day in Geneva in the company of an Indian king who had come to attend a meeting of the League of Nations. There this king informed Lawrence that very recently astrologers had predicted that if Pratap Singh survived 1925 then he would live another 15 years. But it was not to be. Lawrence returned to England on the night of September 24, 1925 There he found a long telegram from Hari Singh announcing the death of Maharaja Pratap Singh. It had occurred a day earlier on September 23, 1925.

According to Lawrence, Pratap Singh was the most inscrutable man he had ever met and knew all that was passing in his state. He took keen interest in India and in England. During his six years service with the Maharaja they had many a long conversations. Pratap Singh had a habit to ask "sudden and sometimes embarrassing questions" and was curious to know about English ways and habits.

One day he bluntly asked Lawrence what he thought of him? In reply Lawrence said that he "reminded him of one of the English kings who never said a foolish thing and never did a wise one ". The answer pleased Pratap Singh. During this interaction Lawrence pleaded with the Maharaja to order cancellation of some fictitious arrears of land revenue which were causing

difficulties to his Settlement work. Pratap Singh simply enquired: "You think it would be wise." "I have thought so for three years", replied Lawrence. The and there the Maharaja called a writer and dictated his order. It saved the Settlement.

Overjoyed, Lawrence, sometime after, suggested that he would collect all the village heads to hear the blessed news from the lips of Maharaja. The Maharaja, however, advised Lawrence that it would be far more appreciable if he made the announcement as he was responsible for this measure. Lawrence, in fact on several previous occasions, had acted on behalf of the Maharaja particularly when he was deposed. Nevertheless, Maharaja agreed. And when the great day arrived, Lawrence went to the Ruby Palace on the river above the Maharaja's Palace. The eager and expectant crowd 'all in white' had gathered on the green lawns of the palace .The meeting was fixed for noon. Just then, appeared Lawrence's Head-clerk down cast and gloomy. He said, "His Highness is not coming." "Oh yes, he is, he is waiting for me to escort him" said Lawrence in a loud voice. Lawrence went off in a boat to the Maharaja's Palace. There was no sign of State barge but Hamira, the Chief Boatman was waiting on the postern steps. He was Lawrence's friend.

"Where is the barge, get it ready", instructed Lawrence as he rushed with his steps towards the Palace passing the lined up guards in the well laid lawns. The entry to the Maharaja's apartment was guarded by two armed men. They seemed to know Lawrence. Seeing him desperate, they simply let him go. Looking out for the Maharaja, Lawrence found the first room empty, but in the next he saw the Maharaja surrounded by his inner courtiers. Among them was old Pandit, Zan Kak, "very courteous and most dangerous man" as Lawrence knew him.

Lawrence shook the Maharaja's hand and never let the grip go till both were seated on the State barge. "Just in time, they are all waiting to hear from their Maharaja and Father the joyful news. If your Highness had been unable to come ,all our faces would have been blackened", said Lawrence. The Maharaja remained silent. On reaching the lawns of the Ruby Palace and when the villagers rose from the ground like white geese rising from the Wular Lake, Maharaja said to Lawrence, "You tell them that the arrears are remitted in Kashmiri, I do not speak Kashmiri." "Your Highness it will do as well in your own Dogri tongue and the effect will be eventually lost unless you announce the news", said Lawrence with due reverence .

At this point Pandit Zan Kak made his way to the presence of the Maharaja and said that he would speak on behalf of the Maharaja. Hearing it, Lawrence laughed and led the Maharaja to the terrace of the palace from where he made the announcement that freed Kashmiris from misery. In doing so, Pratap Singh braved the tyrannical officials, defied the family but made a country.

The friendship between Lawrence and Pratap Singh grew until the former left Kashmir. It was revived when Lawrence returned to India as the Private Secretary to Lord Nathanial Curzon the Viceroy and also when the King of England made a visit to Jammu. Pratap Singh was a soul of courtesy and hospitality. Throughout his life he gloried in the fact that king Edward, King George, Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales had made a visit to the Royal House of Jammu. On all these occasions the scale

of his entertainment was lavish and enormous.

In one particular Royal visit when the Resident of Kashmir had listened to Pratap Singh's regal programme, he ventured to suggest that it was heavy on expenditure and went about to say: " I think---." The Maharaja interrupted him by saying, "yeh think ki baat nahin hai yeh riwaj to hai." On another occasion a German prince of high lineage visited Jammu. Not lacking in his display of royal welcome, Maharaja Pratap Singh hosted a lavish state banquet in honour of the visiting Royal dignitary. The Maharaja requested Lawrence to represent him at the feast. Just when the toast of the king was about to be drunk, the Maharaja entered the room and joined the elite gathering. After the toast was drunk, the Maharaja returned but watched the feast proceedings through a lattice. A short while later he sent for Lawrence and enquired from him as to why he "did not eat tinned asparagus and drink champagne". To this Lawrence quipped saying that he "did not care for these things." On this the Maharaja assertively said: "You have not eaten nor drink eighty rupees worth that I pay to the contractor." Lawrence humbly explained that it was impossible for any Englishman however, competent to eat eighty rupees worth at a meal. Partap Singh simply silenced him by saying enquiringly: "Not if he dined entirely off tinned asparagus".

King George visited Jammu in December 1905. On this occasion Maharaja Pratap Singh with great interest enquired from Lawrence about the voyage to England. Lawrence assumed that the Maharaja was perhaps contemplating a visit there. He however, knew that neither the Maharaja nor his brothers owing to strict adherence to Hindu code had ever visited England. But yet he hoped that may be there was one in Maharaja's mind. Though the Maharaja knew the details of the voyage quite elaborately, yet he kept on asking Lawrence some more. Everything seemed going well till the Maharaja came to the subject of English Channel He shook his head and said, "bahut vomiting hai." implying that there would be much sea-sickness while crossing the Channel .lawrence did his best to reassure the Maharaja. But Pratap Singh insisted gloomily "bahut vomiting hoga". And with that all hope of Maharaja Pratap Singh's possible voyage to England came to a naught.

Lawrence delighted in having talk with Maharaja Pratap Singh. They usually sat in the Palace on the River Jehlum. Their conversation centered religion, philosophy, English customs, and past Viceroys and Commanders in Chief he had known or met. During such conversations, the Maharaja" was always convinced that he was right" and Lawrence 'always felt that he was wrong". Decades later Lawrence summed up these discussions by recalling, " I have discovered the curious point that I was right as regarded the immediate problems; but the Maharaja was right if one could only look forward ten or twenty years. I do not suggest he had powers of prophecy but he thought in centuries while I thought in calendar years."

Out of courtesy Maharaja Pratap Singh sometimes agreed to Lawrence's way of looking at things even though he saw the futility of his well meaning reforms. But in his heart Pratap Singh trusted Lawrence. He had represented the State in a dispute with the Punjab Government over the boundary between Jammu and Punjab. Lawrence fought on behalf of Maharaja Pratap Singh's claim for the State. Fortunately, Lawrence won the case. It

pleased Maharaj Pratap Singh even more as the court officials had warned him that Lawrence being an Englishman was more likely to surrender to the British authority.

Enchanted by Kashmir

Walter Roper Lawrence was born amidst "the lush pastures, the green lawns and the beautiful trees in that slumberous country (England) where white faced Herefords grazed and the apples grew". But years later he thought "that the fairest work of nature was the colour of the almond blossom and iris in Kashmir." Among the great admirers and women friends of Lawrence was the daughter of the famous English novelist Charles Dickens. Lawrence always loved to talk to this beautiful old lady. So for as Charles Dickens himself was concered, he meant much to Lawrence. Dickens' daughter once asked Lawrence: "Would you live life again" To this Lawrence replied: "Every moment of it! And as for my six years in Kashmir, I would live those years fifty times over." Having lived for six years in Kashmir " unspoiled by railways, roads innocent of factories and coal and long streets and concrete houses sleeping in boats or in tents always pitched on green turf under the shade of plane or walnut trees and always within sound of running singing water, Lawrence yearned " that is a life to live over again."

For him "the air there was no mere compound of gas but a blend of dance and laughter". Lawrence was enchanted by the sun and sky of Kashmir While the "smile and sparkle of the sun" bewitched him, he felt air was blue "like the sapphires from Zanskar". He never "knew whether the blue came from the sky or from the rivers and lakes or from the iris which is the flower of the valley". Throughout the long stay of six years in Kashmir, Lawrence remained busy from morning to bed time and was never allowed to be alone. Even often while taking his bath he "would see a hand gliding inside the hanging fall of the tent with a petition in the hand."He practically missed his privacy but was "never tired" of such "importunity". These experiences were "full of interest, humanity and good humour."

At times when Lawrence came across the Bhaggat log the local minstrels he craved for their performance. Their mimes taught him much about the "ways of the officials and the wiles of the peasantry." The only songs Lawrence really liked and enjoyed in India were the songs of these Kashmiri Bhaggats. Occasionally a poet visited his camp. He enjoyed their compositions and offered them small largess- not he liked their Kashmiri verses but more out of humanity because he honoured their calling. One Muslim in particular, a drunkard would solicit whisky from Lawrence by quoting Persian poets. On one particular day when Lawrence was in no mood to listen to his poems, he reviled him for declining the peg!

In his camp life Lawrence was accompanied by several local men and his official surveyors. He moved from village to village and it was to them that he owed much of his knowledge about Kashmir country side. However, there were three special men he had hired locally during his work in the Sindh Valley. Two were Muslims and one a Pandit named Reshi Bhat. All the three knew every inch of their land from the types of the soil to irrigation etc. Lawrence actually learned all and far more of the Sindh Valley from these men than from his own surveyors. And when he was in some real difficulty he always had the privilege of counsel from these three "original friends" as he called them. He gave them no rewards except on occasions a

good feast or some sugar, rice or snuff. And when the end came and Lawrence left Kashmir, none of these voluntary advisors were disappointed when they received no more than Lawrence's letters of thanks

In the year 1926, Lawrence heard from an English official who was then carrying his old work in Kashmir. He wrote to him that his old aide Reshi Bhat had died and when someone had asked the dying man if he had any wish to make; Reshi Bhat had uttered his last words , saying "yes, I desire to see Lawrence Sahib again.".

Walter Roper Lawrence completed the survey of the Valley of Kashmir in September 1894. The completion of the work meant leaving Kashmir and it was a wrench. However, not long after he returned to India in 1902 and this time as Private Secretary to Lord Nathanial Curzon, the Viceroy. And when that stint also came to an end, it meant a final farewell from India. Lawrence regretted the departure. For the charms and allurement India offered to Lawrence he too termed it as "the land of regrets" as a writer once called it. However, what Lawrence regretted most was that he "never had the pleasure of meeting women in India and understanding their lives."

For Kashmir the tribute was poignantly personal: "Kashmir was my paradise, for the work was a constant pleasure. But in a way it unfitted me for the life outside paradise and though I have had the happiest chances and the most delightful experiences since I left the happy valley, I always compare my life now with my life then and nothing has rivaled Kashmir."

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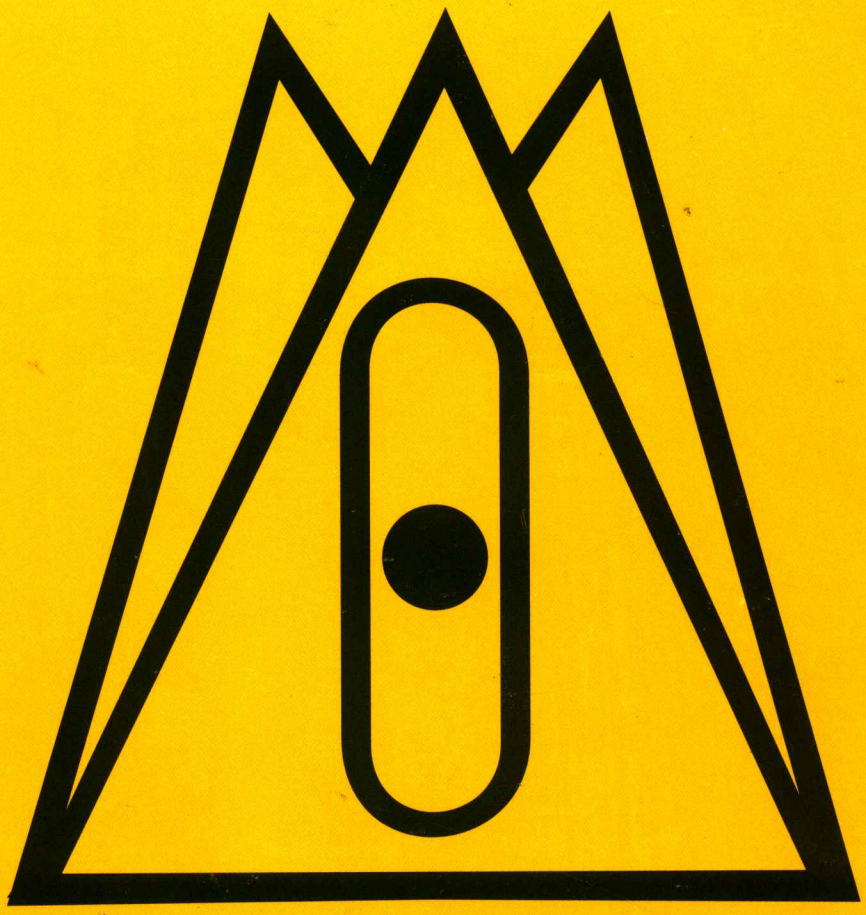
Kishori Kaul with S.H. Raza

Painting by S.H. Raza



ज्ञानं अन्नं

Printed and Published by P N Kachru for and on behalf of :
Nityanand Shastri Kashmir Research Institute • Cir. Office : 402, Link Apartments,
Patpar Ganj, Delhi-92
Editor P N Kachru • Associate Editor Omkar Kachru
• Typeset and Printed at : Wings Printers, Faridabad - 121 005
Annual Subscription : Rs. 150/-